EPA U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY December 2002

EPA Invites Your Comments on Its Plan to Remove and Cap Contaminated Soil at The Oeser Superfund Site

This fact sheet summarizes the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Proposed Plan for cleaning up contaminated soil and groundwater at the Oeser Superfund Site. It also lets you know where to find more information and how to comment on the plan.

✔ Come to a Public Meeting on January 15, 2003

EPA will give a short presentation, followed by an opportunity for questions and answers. A court reporter will be on hand to record your comments. Your written comments will also be accepted at the meeting.

Where: Shuksan Middle School Auditorium
2713 Alderwood, Bellingham, WA
Tel. (360) 676-6454

When: January 15, 2003 7:00 P.M. – 9:00 P.M.

Send Your Comments by January 24, 2003

EPA will accept written comments on the proposed plan until **January 24, 2003**.

Normally a 30 day comment period is provided, but in light of the holiday season we are extending the comment period several extra days. All public comments will be considered by EPA before we make our final decision. Written comments should be addressed to:

Loren McPhillips
EPA Project Manager
1200 6th Avenue, ECL-115
Seattle, Washington 98101

What Is EPA's Preferred Cleanup Alternative?

The proposed plan summarizes the cleanup alternatives that were evaluated for the Oeser site and identifies EPA's preferred alternative. EPA's preferred alternative includes the following elements:

- About 3,400 cubic yards of contaminated soil would be dug up and taken to a landfill.
- An existing cap around the treatment area would be enlarged by approximately 1.2 acres.
- One or more layers of capping material may be added to the existing asphalt cap.
- Long term maintenance would ensure the caps remain effective.
- Institutional controls such as easements and zoning limits would be required to prevent construction of houses on the site and people from drinking the site groundwater.

The proposed cleanup action would address highly contaminated areas still remaining within the Oeser property boundaries. Some cleanup actions have already been completed to address the most immediate threats to people and the environment at the site.

Capping a portion of the site by covering the ground with asphalt or other material will prevent workers from coming in contact with the remaining contaminated soil. The cap will also reduce the potential for rain and storm water to wash contaminants into the groundwater. Storm water and drainage from the newly capped areas would be collected and treated to limit contamination to the nearby Little Squalicum Creek, and other surrounding areas.

Cost of the Preferred Alternative

The estimated cost to construct the preferred alternative is $2.7 million. The total project cost, including long term maintenance of the caps, would be about $3.7 million.

EPA Considered Other Options

In addition to the preferred alternative described above and the no-action alternative, EPA considered:

- capping without removing soil.
- capping and treating shallow groundwater.
- digging up contaminated soil and taking it to a landfill, instead of using a cap.
- biologically treating excavated soil and treating shallow groundwater.

The total project costs for these other alternatives range from $4.2 to $13.7 million dollars. If you want to read the full text of the Proposed Plan, you can request a copy by calling Lilibeth Serrano at (206) 553-1388 or 1-800-424-4372 x1388, or e-mail Serrano-velez.lilibeth@epa.gov.

Contaminants at the Site Include:

Typical wood-treating contaminants are polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), Pentachlorophenol (Penta) and dioxins/furans. Within the boundaries of the Oeser property, elevated levels of contamination were found in surface and subsurface soil, groundwater and air. Some of the same contaminants were detected in nearby areas, but at much lower levels.

Site Risks

EPA looked at several different ways that people or wildlife might be exposed to contamination. Contaminants in surface soil may be released into the air as vapor or be dispersed by wind as dust particles. They may be carried away from the site as runoff after a rainstorm or soak into the soil and groundwater. Vapors and dust particles released from the facility during regular operations may be carried to nearby residences by wind.

EPA studies concluded that cleanup action is only required within the Oeser property boundaries, primarily in the wood treatment area. The preferred alternative is designed to protect workers, reduce dust, and reduce pollution from getting into the groundwater.

EPA Is Working with Other Programs and Agencies

The Northwest Air Pollution Authority regulates the Oeser Company for odors, visual emissions, and fugitive dust. (For all air related concerns, please contact Lester Keel at 360-428-1617).

The Company must also comply with hazardous waste laws, including the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) and the State of Washington Dangerous Waste Requirements. On June 17, 2002, EPA issued a Notice of Violation (NOV) to the Oeser Company for its failure to comply with certain RCRA operating requirements. The company prepared a response to the NOV. EPA is evaluating its enforcement options and has just issued a second NOV.

The Oeser Company also discharges treated storm water to nearby Little Squalicum Creek. Storm water discharged from the Oeser Company has been regulated by a series of permits since the early 1960's. The company currently operates under a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit issued by the Washington State Department of Ecology. This permit places wastewater discharge limits on several pollutants, including Penta, that are in the facility's storm water.

Site Background

The 26-acre Oeser site is located in Whatcom County, Washington, about 1,500 feet north of Bellingham Bay. A small part of the site is located within the City of Bellingham. The Company has been treating wood since the 1940's. During the early days of operation, the company manufactured poles for utility companies using creosote as a wood preservative. In the mid-1980's, the company stopped using creosote at the facility. Penta is the preservative currently used at the facility. On October 27, 1997, the Oeser Company was added to EPA's Superfund National Priorities List.

Where to Find the Proposed Plan

Bellingham Public Library
210 Central Avenue, Bellingham
(360/676-6860

EPA Records Center
7th Floor, 1200 Sixth Avenue, Seattle
206/553-4494

Both locations maintain an Administrative Record, which is available for viewing or copying during business hours.

The Administrative Record is a collection of documents, including the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study, which EPA relies on for making site decisions. These documents can give you a good understanding of the site and the cleanup activities that have been conducted.

On the Internet

The Proposed Plan is available at www.epa.gov/r10earth; click on "index" and click on "O" for Oeser Site

If You Have Any Questions, Please Contact:

Loren McPhillips
EPA Project Manager
1200 6th Avenue, ECL-115
Seattle, Washington 98101
(206) 553-4903

Lilibeth Serrano
Community Involvement Coordinator
1200 6th Ave, ECO 081
Seattle, WA 98101
(206) 553-1388 or
1-800 424-4372 x1388
Serrano-Velez.Lilibeth@epa.gov